**FYI**

• **The Assassination re-reviewed**—So many readers were agitated by the report in the January 1 issue of the *Washington Spectator* on the baleful legacy of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and its widely disbelieved official investigations that the *Spectator* will closely follow the progress of what may be the final effort—of this century, anyway—to learn as much truth as it is still possible to learn on the events in Dallas before, during and after November 22, 1963.

Last month, a new panel called the Assassination Records Review Board, created by the belated but well-intentioned Congressional approval of the Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, began what is by all odds a militantly and intellectually honest search for—and public release of—the missing government documents whose absence helps sustain the J.F.K. enigma.

It is getting little press attention. Reporters—there were two of us—watching a Senate committee hearing on their confirmation saw and heard the five members of the new board, and they seemed an impressive lot. All were nominated by President Clinton after George Bush refused to name any. The review board members:

Henry Graff, 72, of Scarsdale, NY, a retired professor of history at Columbia University, was an Army cryptologist in World War II; Kermit Hall, 49, dean and professor of history and law at the University of Tulsa; William Joyce, 51, associate librarian for special collections at Princeton University; Anna Nelson, 61, professor of history at American University here in Washington; and John Tunheim, 40, Minnesota's deputy attorney general.

In a statement that the other members agreed summarized their views, Graff declared that the review board is committed to "establishing the historical authenticity of the awful events in Dallas" in a way that "will help restore confidence in government."

The board has unusual clout. Congress has given it sweeping, quasijudicial powers—authority to hold public hearings, to take sworn testimony and to subpoena witnesses and documents. Among those testifying may be some of the advocates of theories that Graff called "speculation, sometimes in immoderate tones." There is also a statutory "presumption of immediate disclosure" of documents, meaning that it will now be difficult for government agencies to hide them any longer.

What has happened is that polls showing 80-percent-and-up public acceptance of scores of conspiratorial assassination theories finally moved Congress to try to get the monkey of disbelief off its back by creating an unusually strong review panel. The board will meet over a two-year period in Washington. With an appropriation of $4.5 million a year for staff, it has until October 1996 to compile an archive that few expect to comprise "a smoking gun," but that may answer some important evidentiary questions.